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ABSTRACT

Postsecondary institutions have developed expanded, comprehensive career education programs. Needs and problems that should be addressed when developing such programs include assisting students with educational-vocational planning, providing faculty inservice training improving student support programs, developing work skills related to career goals, providing relevance for diverse student populations, and increasing student recruitment and retention efforts. Specific areas or populations which have received special attention are: infusion into selected fields of study; undecided majors; workers and other adults; and women, disabled, and minorities. Elementary-secondary career education programs have focused on infusion, career guidance, and collaboration with the community. Postsecondary programs have incorporated such strategies along with the following delivery systems: (1) faculty development/consultation; (2) academic advising; (3) experience-based career education (cooperative education); (4) separate courses; (5) liberal arts curricula; (6) mentors and brokers/consultants; (7) individual and group career counseling; (8) career placement services; (9) career centers; (10) computer-based systems; and (11) telephone-based programs. Implementation of the full treatment requires considerable organizational commitment and change, but such a comprehensive effort benefits students. This fact sheet includes a bibliography of six resources, most of which are available from the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) system. (DC)

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Postsecondary Career Education.
OVERVIEW: ERIC Fact Sheet No. 16.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult,
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ERIC OVERVIEW

FACT SHEET No. 16

Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

POSTSECONDARY CAREER EDUCATION

DIVERSITY IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Postsecondary educational institutions have attempted to move forward, building upon an established tradition of exemplary work-education programs, to reach out and establish expanded, comprehensive career education models. This development at the postsecondary level has been more difficult because of the diversity of postsecondary institutions. Rosen, Olson, and Cox (1977) suggest six different types of postsecondary settings: (1) two-year degree programs, (2) four year colleges/universities, (3) professional schools, (4) urban and rural schools, (5) schools with large and small enrollments, and (6) public and private schools. In addition, they suggest six postsecondary traditions: (1) liberal arts, (2) cooperative education, (3) professional education, (4) experiential education, (5) counseling, and (6) competency-based education.

NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

As postsecondary institutions develop career education programs, it is important to identify needs and problems that these programs should address. Although these needs and problems will vary by institutions, the following is a list that is representative:

- Students are reporting an increasing need for assistance with educational-vocational planning.
- Faculty have need for inservice training that will help them become better advisors, become aware of new learner skills needed for entry into occupations, and develop new teaching skills utilizing inschool and community resources.
- Student development support programs need to become better organized to deliver the comprehensive, expanding array of career services now available.
- Business, industry, and government want employable personnel and are increasingly critical of postsecondary education for not helping students develop work skills that relate to the students' career goals.
- A more heterogeneous student body composed of students, returning women, ethnic minorities, and physically disabled learners is presenting postsecondary institutions with challenges for educational relevance of instruction.
- Problems related to maintenance of student enrollment have created the need for programs to increase student recruitment and retention.

TARGET POPULATIONS

Although postsecondary career education efforts have been comprehensive in scope, some programs have been targeted for particular subpopulations. The following are some of the groups receiving special career interventions:

- Infusion into Selected Fields of Study
- Undecided Majors
- Workers and Other Adult Learners
- Women, Disabled, and Minorities

DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Postsecondary institutions have a long history of preparing students for work roles. These career interventions include a wide variety of delivery systems. Model kindergarten through twelve school-based career education programs have concentrated on (1) infusion of career education concepts into the teaching-learning process throughout the curriculum; (2) the career guidance program mediated by the school counselor; and (3) collaborative efforts with the broader community through work-study arrangements, experience-based career education, and cooperative education. Some model postsecondary efforts have also included these three strategies for delivery of career education; however, partial, less comprehensive career education programs have also been used widely in postsecondary institutions. The following are some of these specialized, varied delivery systems:

- Faculty Development/Consultation – A variety of faculty development activities are designed to promote the infusion of career education concepts, particularly for physically disabled persons, into instruction.
- Academic Advising – Advisement typically includes assistance to students in educational planning, course selection, career planning, and referral.
- Experience-based Career Education (Cooperative Education) – Older youth and adults are well-suited to participate in work-learning programs because they do not raise child-labor concerns, have more flexible time schedules, are more mobile, and so forth.
- Separate Courses – Separate career planning/exploration/education courses have been offered in postsecondary institutions for many years.
- Liberal Arts Curricula
- Mentors, Brokers/Consultants
- Individual and Group Career Counseling
- Career Placement Services – Placement offices are in a unique position to conduct follow-up studies of graduates

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and to provide feedback to institutional planners and decision makers. Many placement offices have broadened their outreach effort to lower division and entering students in an effort to prevent later career adjustment problems at graduation time.

- Career Center – Career centers may operate under various names, but they typically utilize self-help, multimedia materials, outreach programs, instructional support, short-term group/individual counseling, and peer/paraprofessional counselors to deliver information services, employability skills training, decision-making and self-assessment programs, and referral services to a highly diversified clientele.
- Computer-based Systems – Instructionally oriented systems provide learners with intensive opportunities to improve career decision-making skills, clarify self-information, such as values, and explore environmental information. Other career information delivery systems provide immediate access to extensive collections of occupational/educational information or assist clients in job placement activities. Recent advances in microcomputers have served to dramatically lower the costs of such systems and to ensure the rapid increase in the use of these career education support systems.
- Telephone-based Programs – Several institutions have described outreach efforts designed to provide short-term career counseling and referral to home-based, office-bound, or rural persons via the telephone.
- Other Systems – In addition to the varied strategies described many postsecondary institutions have other delivery systems. These include (a) continuing education programs providing varied instructional programs to subpopulations on a need basis; (b) CETA-funded contractual arrangements to provide career-related services and instruction to eligible clients; (c) articulation and orientation programs to ease the entry of new students into the postsecondary institution, (d) learning centers and special retention/assistance programs to provide supplemental learning assistance to learners with inadequate academic skills; (e) alumni programs designed to provide ongoing career planning and placement assistance to former graduates; and (f) financial aid programs, including work-study programs, designed to ease the financial burden brought on by the increasing costs of postsecondary education. Each of these additional delivery systems is typically included in a comprehensive postsecondary career education treatment model.

SUMMARY

The practitioner-oriented implications of postsecondary career education efforts to date suggest that implementation of the full treatment requires considerable organizational commitment and change. But there is also evidence that such a comprehensive effort benefits students in terms of fewer problems in education-work transition, builds closer working relationships within the institution among faculty and staff, helps faculty improve classroom instruction, and builds closer relationships between the institutions and off-campus constituents. Prior experience in implementing partial and full career education interventions has provided a useful agenda for further efforts in this area.

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